

STRENGTH ★ RESILIENCE ★ JUSTICE

★★ Communicating Your Message: Media Tips & Tools ★★

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), held April 2-8, 2017, recognizes the challenges faced by crime victims and the ongoing struggle to establish victims' rights. This year's theme—*Strength. Resilience. Justice.*—highlights the importance of forging healthy, sustainable communities to build capacity both before and in the aftermath of crime. This holistic approach strengthens victims and communities, improves resilience, and increases the likelihood of achieving justice.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is an excellent time for your organization to increase its visibility in the community, promote valuable resources for victims of crime, and engage in a dialogue with community members. By creating a comprehensive NCVRW public awareness campaign involving social media, traditional media, and events, you will reach community colleagues, local organizations, and the general public to raise awareness of crime victims' issues, rights, and services. These activities increase interaction with your networks as well as with those who may not be aware of the services offered by your organization. Local communities play an integral part of providing crime victims with the support and the resources they need to recover from crime, and your organization plays an important role in educating, advocating for, and raising awareness in your community.

The Current Media Landscape

While media has evolved over the past few decades, it still serves the purpose of communicating your message to your audience. Both social media and traditional media can be used to make statements about current events and causes that align with the mission of your organization. Social media is often the cheapest, fastest, and most effective way to reach a wide audience. It

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helps organizations engage in dialogue with each other and with their community. Traditional media sources are a way to demonstrate reliability and reach, as well as interact with community members who have less of an online presence. National Crime Victims' Rights Week provides an opportunity for your organization to increase its engagement with the media leading up to, during, and following the observance (April 2-8). The tools throughout this section are designed to help you create a comprehensive public awareness campaign for National Crime Victims' Rights Week as well as maintain an effective and constant presence throughout the year.

How to Use These Resources

In this section, you will find samples of various media, which can be tailored to your objectives and used to communicate with diverse audiences. You will also learn tips and tools for pitching stories, maximizing your outreach efforts, increasing engagement, and advocating for victims with the media. Customizing the sample media and adapting it to fit the activities and priorities of your organization will increase your visibility and lead to a successful NCVRW campaign.

In addition, the sample media will be marked with symbols that represent appropriate networks for sharing NCVRW information and events:



With your professional network



On Facebook



On Twitter



On Instagram



Through a blog post





Engaging a wide audience regarding your organization's NCVRW activities can be time-consuming. This goal may feel overwhelming for organizations with small staff, while large organizations may have staff members dedicated to social media and media relations. An active social media presence is not difficult and can vastly increase connections and exposure. It takes as much time as you have to dedicate. To this end, the following sample media plans require various levels of involvement. Use these plans or develop your own to fit your time constraints and staff availability. You can also use these plans to set media and outreach goals for the entire year.

Considerations when Crafting a Media Plan:

- Who is your audience?
- What is your message? What do you want to accomplish?
- Where do you want to engage that audience? What is the best method to communicate your message? (Your mode and method should be adapted for every communication.)
- When should you share? How often should you share?
- Why is this message important to your audience? Why should they care?

Important to Remember:

- Social media is about two-way communications. To have successful engagement, follow organizations in your network, and share and retweet their posts.
- Content is key. Posts should be relevant, timely, and consistent for best reach.
- Be intentional with what you share and post. Make sure your content fits into your overall messaging strategy.
- Use #NCVRW2017 in your posts.

Sample Plan 1

For those:

- ✓ Interested in building a stronger media presence
- ✓ That have a staff member able to dedicate a little bit of time (no more than **1 hour**) each week

Throughout March and April:



- Post on **Twitter** and **Facebook 2-3x** a week! Share another organization's posts or copy a sample status update from this guide. (See page 5.)
- If you already have an established blog, write **1 blog post** regarding your organization's NCVRW activities.

Set **goals** that support your organizational activities. Some examples might include:

- Gain **50** new followers
- Receive **10-20 retweets**, shares, or likes per week
- Establish **online connections** with other organizations by liking or following their pages

Crafting an NCVRW Media Plan

Sample Plan 2

For those:

- ✓ Interested in building a stronger media presence and a relationship with local news organizations
- ✓ That have a staff member able to dedicate some of their time (**4-8 hours**) each week

Throughout March and April:



- Post at least **4x on Twitter** and **3x on Facebook** every week! You can respond to another organization's post, inform the public about your resources, or post a relevant news article.
- Write **1 blog post** about how your organization is participating in National Crime Victims' Rights Week this year.
- Submit a **Letter to the Editor** or an **Op-Ed** to your local newspaper.
- Optional: Write a **news release** on your organization's recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Set **goals** that support your organizational activities.

Some examples might include:

- Gain **100** new followers
- Receive **25-30 retweets**, shares, or likes per week
- Have a **Letter to the Editor** or an **Op-Ed** published in the local newspaper

Sample Plan 3

For those:

- ✓ Interested in reaching a wide audience and increasing visibility
- ✓ That have a staff member who is able to devote significant time (**8+ hours**) each week

Throughout March and April:



- Post at least **1x day** on **Twitter** and on **Facebook**! Use a variety of tactics: share others' posts, respond to other organizations, post news articles, highlight neighboring events and services, or send out your own NCVRW messages related to this year's theme, Strength. Resilience. Justice.
- Write **2 blog posts** about National Crime Victims' Rights Week, one published the week before National Crime Victims' Rights Week about the history of the week and what your organization is doing to commemorate the week. The second, published after National Crime Victims' Rights Week, can be used to follow up on your organization's events and national NCVRW events, such as the Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony.
- Submit a **Letter to the Editor** and an **Op-Ed** for print in your local newspaper each month.
- Write **2+ news releases**; possibilities include announcing your organization's NCVRW activities and your participation in the mayor's proclamation.

Set **goals** that support your organizational activities.

Some examples might include:

- Gain **200** new followers
- Receive **40-50 retweets**, shares, or likes per week
- **Connect with professionals** and community members in a variety of ways. ★



Social media is often the cheapest, fastest, and most effective way to reach a wide audience. In addition to alerting traditional journalists to important stories, social media allows you to engage with the public and build relationships through succinct messaging that is unfiltered by mainstream media. The most important social media platforms for your campaign are available for free, though many allow you to pay for access to a larger audience.

Facebook Posts



Many organizations already have a Facebook business or “fan” page. Utilize these established pages to promote NCVRW activities and information. Post photos, videos, company content, invitations to upcoming events, and links back to your website. Like and re-share posts from other organizations in your network. Use the sample status updates below or create your own to launch your NCVRW Facebook campaign.

5 Tips for a Perfect Facebook Post:

1. Keep it short and informative; readers should not have to expand the post to read the whole thing.
2. Include a link.
3. Be timely and current.
4. Post during non-peak hours for the best reach (5:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.).
5. Post intentionally, as part of a consistent sharing strategy.

TIP: EMBEDDING LINKS IN FACEBOOK

To embed a link in your Facebook status, copy the URL into the status field and wait momentarily until Facebook generates a thumbnail and page description. Then delete the URL text you copied, enter the rest of your status text, and post.

Sample Status Updates

- When victims feel understood and supported, they are more likely to seek services. “Strength. Resilience. Justice.” #NCVRW2017 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week highlights culturally competent services and justice in underserved communities. This year’s theme is “Strength. Resilience. Justice.” Learn more at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017 and get involved.
- The cycle of violence and trauma is interrupted when victims are able to access an established system of victim services and when communities deliver victim-centered, culturally competent justice. #NCVRW2017 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017
- We are more likely to achieve justice when organizations have the strength and resilience to provide comprehensive, wraparound services. #NCVRW2017

- Our efforts cannot succeed without local law enforcement, victim advocates, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, child and family services, community leaders, community members, educators, coaches, parents, and others. Everyone plays a role in serving victims. #NCVRW2017
- The theme for National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2017 is "Strength. Resilience. Justice." which emphasizes the need to reach victims where they are—physically, culturally, emotionally—if they are to trust that the system will work for them. #NCVRW2017
- Find ways to partner with advocates in your community by viewing past National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Projects via the National Association for VOCA Assistance Administrators. www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins April 2. Visit the Office for Victims of Crime's NCVRW website for information about resources and help in planning events and activities. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017
- Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week! How do you plan on commemorating this week? Let us know! #NCVRW2017
- Looking for information on victim services? Download the Help Series brochures from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. www.ovc.gov/pubs/helpseries
- How have you used the theme video from National Crime Victims' Rights Week? Tell us in the comments and share your activities with others.
- Visit www.victimsofcrime.org/training for training opportunities from the National Center for Victims of Crime. Learn from and network with others on a variety of crime victim topics.
- Visit the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards for information on crime victim compensation in your state: www.nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=6
- April 2-8, 2017, is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. OVC TTAC has recorded webinars on victims' rights available to watch at your convenience. <http://go.usa.gov/x8Try>
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit <https://www.victimlaw.info> today to research state, federal, or tribal law.
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime.
- Follow the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide Partners to see how organizations across the country are supporting victims this NCVRW. Meet the partners at: www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017
- Learn how to help victims of financial crime with "Taking Action: An Advocate's Guide to Assisting Victims of Financial Fraud" #NCVRW2017 www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Visit our partners at HHS to get informed and learn how you can help protect kids. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth>
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month! Find out how to support victims of sexual assault in our schools, college campuses, workplaces, and the community. www.nsvrc.org/saam
- Strength, the will to overcome, and resilience, the ability to adapt to challenges or change, work in tandem to promote healing and allow people to move forward after trauma, tragedy, or setbacks. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017 ★

Twitter Posts



Twitter is an information-sharing network where each post is limited to 140-characters, called a “tweet.” Once you have [set up your own account](#), choose a Twitter handle (username) that other users will recognize (often the name or nickname of your organization). After you set up your account, begin following others, follow their followers, retweet their tweets, and promote them to your audience. Maximize your Twitter presence by staying engaged in conversations on subjects that are important to you, and by quickly responding to other users’ tweets and mentions of your organization or causes. Hashtags are a useful way to become part of a conversation, so make sure to use the most applicable tags, and add [#NCVRW2017](#) to your NCVRW tweets.

Sample Tweets

- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week begins April 2. Visit [www.ovc.gov](#) for information about resources and events. [#NCVRW2017](#)
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 2-8, 2017. Search [#NCVRW2017](#) to stay connected!
- Victims should be given the assistance they need to make informed decisions for their own lives. Follow [#NCVRW2017](#) to get involved!
- Strength. Resilience. Justice. Search [#NCVRW2017](#) to learn how you can help victims of crime!
- We must reach victims where they are—physically, culturally, emotionally—for them to trust the system [#NCVRW2017](#)
- We reaffirm our commitment to creating a victim service and criminal justice response that assists all victims of crime [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Strength, resilience, and justice are necessary in forging healthy, sustainable, productive communities [#NCVRW2017](#) [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week 2017 starts today! This year’s theme is “Strength. Resilience. Justice.” [#NCVRW2017](#)
- When victims are heard and supported, they are more likely to seek services. “Strength. Resilience. Justice.” [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Download the [#NCVRW2017](#) Resource Guide free at [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#) for tips on observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.
- Free resources are available to help victims of financial fraud this [#NCVRW2017](#). Download here: [http://ow.ly/q1NmI](#)
- Download free awareness posters for your [#NCVRW2017](#) activities! [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- Looking for ways to get involved in [#NCVRW2017](#)? Find tips on raising awareness: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Visit [http://ow.ly/TbMtL](#) or follow @NSVRC for info! [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Get statistics and talking points for your [#NCVRW2017](#) activities: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- Do you know a victim of crime? Have you been victimized? Get helpful info from the [#NCVRW2017](#) Resource Guide: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- Visit [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#) to learn more about the National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Partners [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Need inspiration for your [#NCVRW2017](#) event? See the NCVRW Resource Guide for [#victim](#) centered quotes [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#)
- See the [#NCVRW2017](#) Commemorative Calendar of 2017 crime-victim observances [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2017](#) and support victims all year

- Learn how to protect yourself from fraud this [#NCVRW2017](#) and how to assist others: <http://ow.ly/q1NmI>
- OVC offers a calendar of upcoming #victim assistance events. Learn more or add your training at <http://ow.ly/q1NDo> [#NCVRW2017](#)
- April 2–8 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Watch OVC's recorded webinars on victims' rights. <http://go.usa.gov/x8Try> [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit <https://www.victimlaw.info> to research state, federal, or tribal law. [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime. [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Want to network with [#victim](#) advocates? Visit VictimsofCrime.org/training for updates on the [@CrimeVictimsOrg](#) National Training in Portland [#NCVRW2017](#)
- OVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: <http://ow.ly/q1NM9> [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Stalking is a crime, not a joke. Get the facts: [@SRC_NCVC](http://ow.ly/q1NQj) [#NCVRW2017](#)
- OVC's TTAC offers free trainings on victim advocacy and assistance. Learn more here: <http://ow.ly/rpGhK> [#NCVRW2017](#)
- The cycle of violence can be interrupted when victims use supportive coping practices and communities deliver timely services [#NCVRW2017](#)
- Bystander intervention shows strength, builds resilient communities, and provides justice for victims of crime. [#NCVRW2017](#).
- Scam Alert. Crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/scam-alerts> ★

HIGHLIGHTING THE 2017 CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION FACT SHEETS



You can craft a separate, evergreen media plan for the 2017 *NCVRW Resource Guide's* Crime and Victimization Factsheets. Use the Commemorative Calendar in "Developing Your Campaign" for a list

of notable awareness weeks and months throughout the year, and align each fact sheet with a relevant topic for that month. For instance, during Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January, promote the Human Trafficking Fact Sheet and use its contents to inform your other outreach efforts that month. For Elder Abuse Awareness Month in June, similarly promote and use the Elder Abuse Fact Sheet, focusing on community partners, organizations, and facilities that interact with or care for seniors.

Blog Post



If you are interested in sharing more in-depth communications with your community online, a blog is a great way to do it. [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#) are two excellent platforms to host your blog. You can post as frequently as you wish, but a good goal is once a month. Be sure to link to your blog on your Facebook and Twitter pages.

5 Steps to an Engaging Blog Post:

1. Make sure to target your audience by using an appropriate reading level and content.
2. Check your facts; only use statistics that come from reliable sources.
3. State your main points in your introduction and again in the conclusion.
4. Limit your post to no more than 750 words.
5. Time your blog post to coincide with events and current news.

Sample Blog Post

This Is a Safe Space

Recent mass casualty events have changed the way we think about crime and the places we believe are safe. Events in Newtown, Aurora, and Orlando shattered our security, exhausted our compassion, and tested our resilience. We, at [your organization's name], want you to know that this is a safe space. We welcome all, no matter what religion you practice, the color of your skin, the language you speak, or whom you love.

These and other mass casualty events underline the importance of creating space and opportunity for difficult conversations about prejudice and understanding, isolation and inclusivity. They have revealed how fear has the power to turn neighbor against neighbor. The media often oversimplifies mass casualty events as the result of one person's mental illness. However, these events are inherently more complex than one issue. While mental illness may be a contributing factor in some cases, biased attitudes and stereotypes foster an environment in which these atrocities are possible.

We must come together as Americans to build a culture that values understanding, inclusion, and diversity. We need communities—workplaces, houses of worship, neighborhoods, civic and recreational centers—to be places where individuals are known and supported, regardless of their differences, so that instead of fear, there is empathy. When we are able to do this, our entire community will be a safe and welcoming space for all people. ★

Other Social Media Platforms



Periscope

Periscope is Twitter's live-streaming video app. It allows the user to broadcast and watch live video in real time from around the world. The application has basic features, including the ability to attend meetings remotely and share events with the public. Note that Periscope video streams are only saved by the application for 24 hours. Use Periscope to share your NCVRW events with community members who are unable to attend in person.

YouTube

YouTube is the world's second largest search engine and the third most-visited site on the internet. To begin, set up a [YouTube channel](#) for your organization, which will link with any other Google accounts you have. Choose a name that matches your brand, and post your channel URL on your Facebook page and other social network profiles. If applicable, apply for a [YouTube Nonprofit Program](#) account, which gives you more features, such as the ability to add clickable "asks" on top of videos and upload longer videos. Use YouTube to upload recordings of presentations and trainings from your organization, as well as highlights of your NCVRW events. [Visit OVC's YouTube Channel.](#)

Instagram

Instagram is a photo-sharing site that allows you to upload and share photos with your network. Once you have set up an [Instagram account](#), snap photos of your NCVRW events on your mobile devices and give your followers a sneak peek before you post them on your website. Expand the audience for your photos by "tagging" them with keywords and hashtags to identify or organize them on Instagram. Be sure to add [#NCVRW2017](#) to your NCVRW posts.

LinkedIn

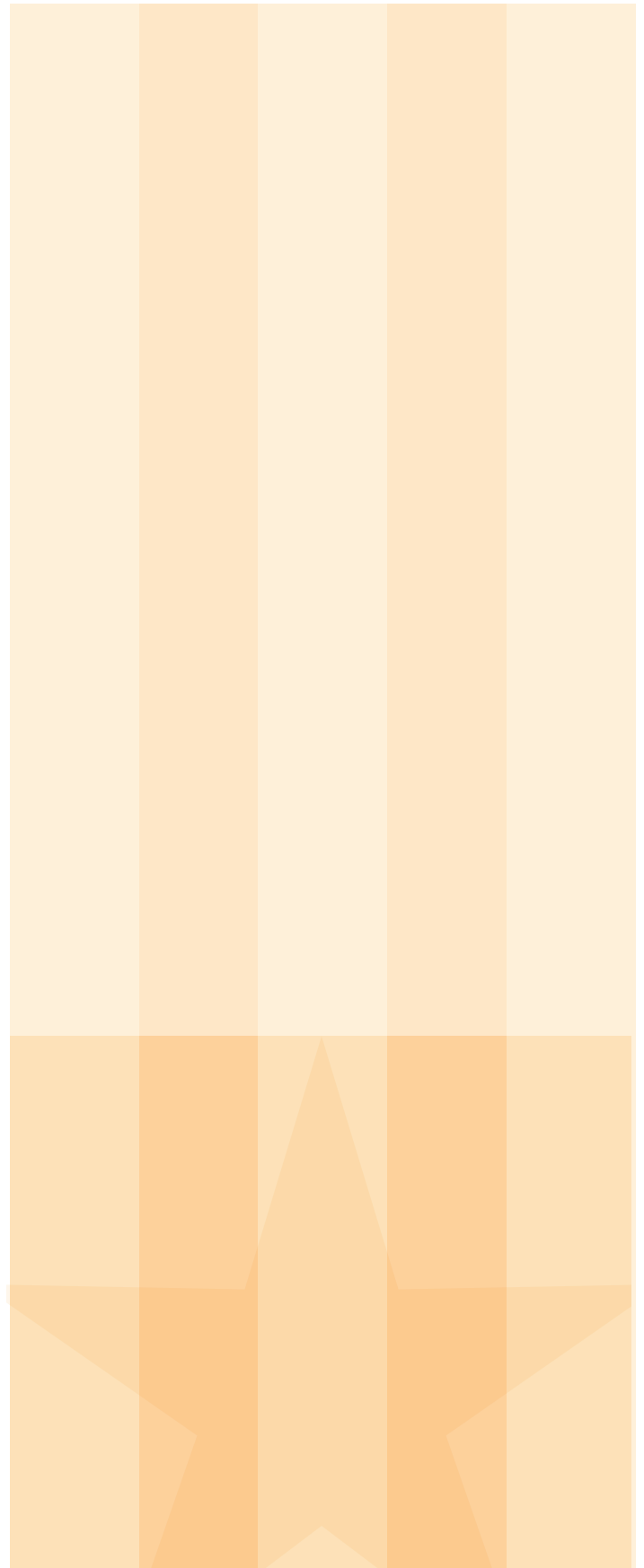
LinkedIn is a professional network for individuals and organizations. You can create a [LinkedIn Company page](#) for your organization. Follow the setup wizard for creating your company profile. Be sure to include a header image and profile image for your page, and focus on keywords from your mission statement throughout your description information. Additionally, [LinkedIn Showcase pages](#) can be used to highlight specific initiatives, such as National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Additional Tips for Social Media Posts

In addition to Facebook and Twitter status updates, use the following ideas to generate more NCVRW posts on your social media sites.

- Download NCVRW theme artwork from the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) website, including NCVRW-specific Facebook cover and profile images.
- Post photos or videos of your organization's NCVRW planning or events.
- Post photos of your NCVRW event speakers on your Facebook page (in advance of the events) and promote them on Twitter and your other social media.
- [Download the app](#) for Instagram, a photo-editing platform for iPhone or Android users that converts your photos to clear, small images and allows you to add filters to those images. Instagram interfaces with Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.
- Upload posters from the Office for Victims of Crime's [gallery of awareness posters](#) on crime- and victim-related topics to your social media platforms.
- Post links to NCVRW op-eds or news releases in your local newspaper or television station website.
- Pull relevant statistics from the [Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets](#) included in the NCVRW Resource Guide.

- Post links to the NCVRW statements or proclamations of your local or state officials (and include brief descriptions about these statements).
- Allow other Facebook users to post stories, event reminders, pictures, and updates on your wall. Change your Facebook settings to “open settings,” and be sure to **monitor your wall consistently for negative or offensive posts**.
- Check the Facebook pages of the 2017 NCVRW Resource Guide Partners and “like” or link to them.
- Ask your Facebook fans and Twitter followers to repost your status updates on their social media networks.
- Post current and recent NCVRW videos on YouTube.



TRADITIONAL MEDIA



Traditional media publications reach a wide audience through print newspapers and online publications. They are an opportunity to draw attention to crime-related issues in your community, share information about the work of your organization, and ask for community support. The samples included can be modified for use by your organization throughout National Crime Victims' Rights Week or as a model for other activities throughout the year.

Press Release



The purpose of a press release is to generate media coverage for your organization's participation in National Crime Victims' Rights Week and involvement in other events throughout the year. Edit the sample press release to reflect issues in your community and to highlight events and commemorations.

Make sure to share the release with your contacts and local media; don't forget to post to your website, link to Facebook, and tweet. Also use this opportunity to generate exposure for your organization, to highlight issues and to position your spokesperson as an expert in the field. For best results, distribute your release at least 10 days prior to your event. Use the lead time to follow up with reporters and partner organizations, find spokespeople, answer questions, and create media kits for each important event. The media kits should include your organization's contact information, names and e-mails for leadership or spokespeople, your mission statement or description of your work, and information about your event.

5 Elements of a Noteworthy Press Release

1. Craft an attention-grabbing headline.
2. Include the main point in the first paragraph.
3. Use relevant statistics.
4. Incorporate a strong quotation to engage your reader.
5. End with contact information and additional resources.

Sample **Press Release****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

[Date]

[Name/Title/Agency]

CONTACT:

[Phone number]

[E-mail]

[Your City/Organization] Commemorates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 2-8*[Customize sub-heading to highlight local events, activities, partnerships, or key issues]*

[City/State] – [Organization Name], in commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), April 2-8, 2017, is hosting special events and programs *[list events and/or activities]*, to raise awareness about crime victims' issues and rights and introduce the community to the important resources and services available. Last year, over 5 million individuals were a victim of a crime, and there were nearly 15 million property victimizations (according to the 2015 National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics).

[Your City/Organization] will commemorate the advancement of victims' rights and highlight issues surrounding victimization by holding *[insert description of event, date, time and venue]*. [Your City/Organization] is also honoring *[name, title]* and *[name, title]*, champions in advocating for expanded support and services to communities affected by crime.

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) of the U.S. Department of Justice leads communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 2-8, by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's theme—*Strength. Resilience. Justice.*—emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary responses and building the capacity of individuals, service providers, and communities to respond to crime and support the ongoing healing of victims and survivors. The theme also supports OVC's Vision 21 Initiative to encourage research, address emerging issues, and build the capacity of victim service organizations by increasing the use of technology and training.

[Include a quote from a recognized leader or official about the importance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week in your community.]

OVC and *[local organization]* encourage widespread participation in the week's events and in other victim-related observances throughout the year. The U.S. Department of Justice will host OVC's annual National Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony in Washington, DC, to honor outstanding individuals and programs that serve victims of crime. For additional information about this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week and how to assist victims in your community, please contact *[agency/organization]* at *[area code/telephone number]* or visit *[agency's website]* at *[web address]*. For additional ideas on how to support victims of crime, visit the OVC website, www.ovc.gov.

###

[Your Organization's Mission Statement/Boilerplate.] ★

Letter to the Editor



Readers' letters and comments are often the most read sections of newspapers and news websites. They are great tools for building awareness about National Crime Victims' Rights Week. By writing a letter to the editor, you can link National Crime Victims' Rights Week or one of your organization's programs to a current local, state, or national issue by showing why readers should care about the rights and concerns of crime victims. Ideally, you would cite a reliable recent study, quote statistics about the crime or issue, or stress the need for more research about crimes that are often hidden or underreported.

Consider asking local law enforcement officers or other organizations to partner with you or write their own letters to highlight the needs of crime victims and how the public can help. Letters that are endorsed by multiple community groups will receive more attention. When you submit the letter, include your contact information so that the newspaper can contact you if it decides to print your letter. If the newspaper does not publish your letter, consider submitting it to a local organization that publishes a newsletter, post it on your website, or share on social media.

5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Letter

1. Respond to an article or commentary recently published. Begin your letter by citing this article.
2. Keep it brief, no more than 250 to 300 words.
3. Include a call to action.
4. Use verified facts and reference the original source.
5. Include information on where people can learn more about the issue.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Sexual Assault Must Not Be Dismissed

One in five women will be raped in her lifetime according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The prevalence of this crime, along with recent news headlines, has revealed our continued tolerance for behaviors that normalize sexual assault.

Too many people cling to outdated notions of what constitutes sexual assault and harassment, including how the victim should respond and how long it should take them to recover. These attitudes inhibit progress and can be downright dangerous. We must remove the barriers that keep many victims from achieving justice and other victims from being heard at all.

Recently, college campuses and workplaces have made advances in addressing sexual assault in those environments. However, children, elders, men, persons with disabilities, and other populations face nearly insurmountable barriers to reporting sexual assault and other forms of abuse. Often the most formidable barrier is finding someone they trust who will believe them. Many victims who report undergo further traumatization when they tell friends and family, report to law enforcement, or participate in the investigation or trial. The criminal justice system is not always a welcoming place for victims of sexual assault, causing many victims to question whether it is even worth reporting when sentencing is often not commensurate with the crime.

As a society, we must change attitudes and put an end to the persistent dismissal of sexual assault. We must provide the opportunity and environment for all victims to be heard and believed. While we cannot overcome every barrier overnight, simply believing and supporting a victim of sexual assault can lead to a path of healing and recovery. It is critical that we no longer look the other direction. We must hold perpetrators accountable, confront stereotypes, and change systems that hinder justice.

Name

Organization

City, State ★

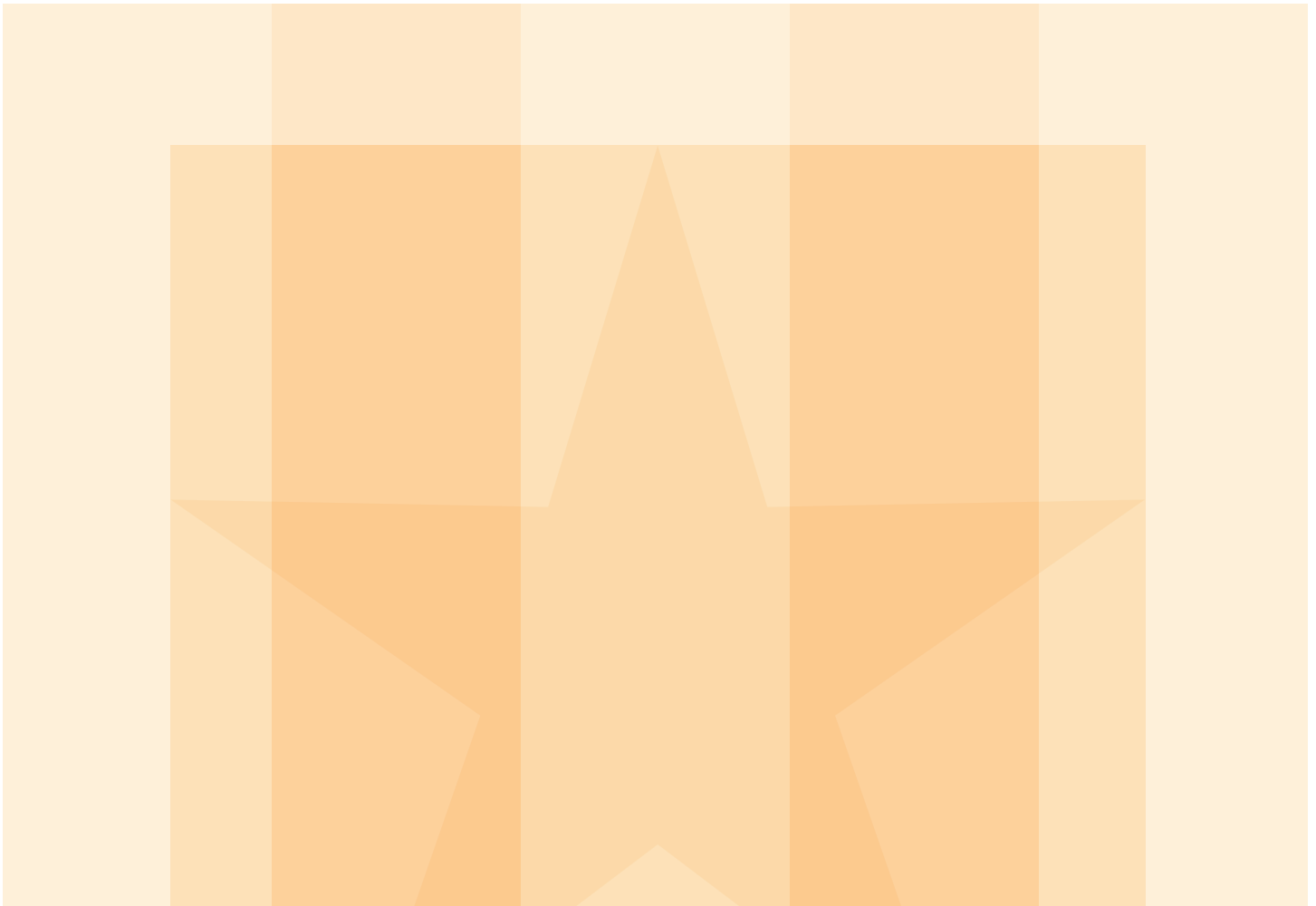
Opinion-Editorial Column



Newspaper editorial pages—both on paper and online—are highly popular among readers. Op-eds are longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve deeper into issues. An op-ed is your chance to influence opinions, affect policy, and highlight the work you or your organization is doing to support crime victims' rights. One way to develop an op-ed is to re-search local crime coverage and important issues in your community. For example, how are the universities and colleges in your area responding to sexual assault? How would a partnership between law enforcement and victim services agencies benefit your community? Use or adapt the sample op-ed on the following page or craft your own to highlight an issue local to your community.

5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Op-Ed

1. Be persuasive.
2. Be confident. You are the expert in this field.
3. Stay current on related events and the cultural conversation about them.
4. Use plain language that can be read and understood by a wide audience.
5. Keep your submission to 800 words or less.



Sample Op-Ed Column

Accessibility Is Vital for a Strong Community

A central premise of our community is that it's open to everyone. We have the right to engage with our political structure, education system, public services, and other programs that facilitate and strengthen community life. However, individuals with disabilities often find they are cut off from these services, overlooked, or unable to access the help they need.

Reaching people with disabilities is all the more important because of the scope of those affected. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that nearly 1 in 5 adults has a physical, mental, or cognitive disability, and they are three times as likely to experience a violent crime as individuals without disabilities.

People with disabilities are at higher risk of victimization because they may be dependent on another person to meet critical needs. Caregivers—such as relatives, significant others, neighbors, or professional aids—may control access to medication, transportation, finances, or more distant loved ones. Victims may be unable to report a crime without their caregiver's assistance or they may be anxious about who will care for them if they report their caregiver's maltreatment. If they do successfully reach out for services, they may face difficulty getting the accommodations they need due to a service provider's lack of understanding or funding.

There is good news, a recent increase in federal formula funding for victim services providers, coupled with new provisions in federal regulations that govern this formula funding, encourages victim service providers to make their services more fully accessible to anyone with a disability.

For example, the new VOCA Formula Victim Assistance regulations (entitled the [Final Rule](#), available through the Office for Victims of Crime of the U.S. Department of Justice) now allow VOCA Formula sub-recipients who serve victims to make minor building adaptations to better comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Domestic violence shelters and other victim assistance programs can construct accessible bathrooms, wider doorways, and wheelchair ramps. Buildings should not hinder the ability of victims to seek the services they need to recover from crime.

The new funding regulations also cover the cost of forensic interviewing if the victim has a cognitive disability. Primarily used in child abuse or sexual assault cases, forensic interviewing methods are victim-centered, trauma-informed, and take into account varying levels of comprehension. When performed correctly, this type of interview limits retraumatization and provides the emotional support necessary for a victim to move forward.

[Discuss your organization, services, and the steps you are taking to make your services/building more accessible.]

The new VOCA funding is an unprecedented opportunity for our community to reach and serve crime victims with disabilities. By using these funds to increase equitable access to critical and appropriate services for individuals with disabilities, we will build a stronger, more resilient community. ★

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)



Broadcast media (radio and television) are required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to serve “the public interest.” Many stations donate portions of their commercial time to non-commercial causes and air community calendars with information about local events and activities. PSAs (public service announcements) are short video or audio messages that advertise a public service or event and, as such, are broadcast for free by radio or television stations.

To get a PSA broadcast on air, contact your local radio or television stations about two months in advance to inquire about their policies on airing PSAs and their submission guidelines. Find out who is in charge of selecting which PSAs will run. This person could be the public affairs director, traffic director, program director, promotions manager, or station manager. Be sure to include local cable (sometimes called “community access”) and college stations in your outreach.

Once you’ve made contact with the stations, inform them that you will be sending a PSA to air. Include basic information about your organization in the delivery, such as a cover letter and pamphlet. Follow up with a phone call to ask if the PSA was received and when it will be aired. Continue to reach out to the station—persistence is key.

Sample 15-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with those whose lives have been forever altered.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need.

Sample 30-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. Many will need ongoing care and resources. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress achieved, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime. Be the difference. Reach out, listen, and support them as they recover on their own terms.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need.

Sample 60-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. Many will need ongoing care and resources. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress achieved, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime. Be the difference—Speak up. Listen. Empower. Respond. React. Reach out. This National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, we resolve to build stronger responses in our communities that ensure all victims are treated with compassion and respect and receive the justice they deserve. We all have a role.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need. ★

*ALTERNATE ENDING

You can also end each PSA with the following national helpline information:

Call 855-4-VICTIM or visit VictimConnect.org to learn about victims’ rights and options—confidentially and compassionately.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a perfect opportunity to focus the media's attention on crime issues relevant to your local community. Use search engines to look up local crime victim stories, and note which reporters cover these stories in your area and their contact information, often found at the end of their stories. Follow those reporters on social media. You can also check with the relevant news desk or outlet website for the appropriate contact.

Working with Reporters

If your agency is holding a newsworthy event, either for National Crime Victims' Rights Week or any time during the year, send out invitations and alerts via social media, and contact your local reporters by phone and e-mail. Briefly describe the event and offer yourself as a resource. Reporters are on tight deadlines, so anything you can give them ahead of time is useful.

Reporters will often ask for a local or human-interest angle. Be prepared for the following types of questions when pitching:

- Has a local victim triumphed over tragedy or found a way to help other victims restore their lives? Is there a victim who would be willing to share his or her story?
- Do you have a reliable source for up-to-date statistics on a particular kind of crime? Position your organization as a resource and refer to the "Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets" in this Resource Guide for data points.
- Have there been any other recent examples of the crime you are discussing in your area or in other communities around the country?
- Who could brief the reporter on the current status of the law in this area?
- Can your organization's director provide an on-the-record comment? ★

Advocating for Victims with the Media

Media coverage of crime greatly influences public perceptions about victims. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of crimes, as reporters rush to meet deadlines, their reporting may not reflect the desired sensitivity to traumatized victims. Because many television and print reporters do not receive training in how to interact with victims, you have an opportunity to help them approach crime stories with sensitivity. As a victim advocate who understands the perspective of victims and knows what reporters need to include in their stories, you can play a key role in advocating for victim-sensitive coverage of crime.

Tips for Reporters

In writing news stories about crime, reporters have the difficult task of seeking interviews from victims and conducting those interviews in an ethical manner when victims agree to speak. Advocates can help reporters prepare to speak with victims by offering suggestions about how to approach the victim so that he or she feels comfortable and safe. Educate reporters on how to approach crime victims by sharing the following guidelines.¹

Asking for the Interview

- Recognize that the victim may be coping with shock and trauma;
- Approach the victim without equipment—notebooks, tape recorders, cameras, and lights—and try to make a human connection;
- Introduce yourself as a reporter, give the victim your name and title, and briefly explain what you hope to achieve with your story;
- Express concern for the victim by saying, “I am sorry for what happened to you” or “I am sorry for your loss”;
- Ask victims how they would prefer to be addressed, and observe that preference in all your questions;
- Give the victim a reason to speak with you by explaining the purpose of the story, the fact that it

will be published, and why the victim’s participation is important;

- Tell the victim how much time you need and observe that time limit;
- Courteously accept the victim’s refusal if he or she is unwilling to be interviewed;
- If the victim says no, express interest in a future interview, leave a business card, or send an e-mail with your contact information, and ask for the names of others who may be willing to speak.

Logistics and Other Considerations

- Make the victim comfortable—offer a chair or suggest a comfortable, safe place to talk;
- Respect victims’ space—because people in trauma often do not want to be touched, hand the microphone to the victim and explain how to adjust it;
- Ask permission to record the interview;
- Clarify ground rules—explain that anything victims say may be used in the interview

Victim Advocacy during Interviews

With the help of victim advocates, reporters can approach the interview with sensitivity toward the victim and the understanding that he or she may be undergoing trauma associated with the crime. Advocates who are present during the interview can step in if the reporter’s questions become too pointed or difficult or if the victim seems to be getting upset. By making victims’

¹ Bonnie Bucqueroux and Anne Seymour, *A Guide for Journalists Who Report on Crime and Crime Victims*, (Washington, DC: Justice Solutions, 2009), 2-10, accessed October 23, 2014, <http://www.mediacrimevictimguide.com/journalistguide.pdf>.

Working with the Media

needs a priority, advocates can keep the interview on track and encourage the reporter to do so as well.

Tips for Victims

Advocating for victims with the media also includes helping victims decide whether to accept interviews, how to minimize invasions of their privacy, and how to exercise their rights and options in dealing with reporters. Advocates can also help victims anticipate questions and prepare how to answer them.

Before the Interview

By giving victims the following checklist of questions and walking through it with them, you can help victims decide whether to participate in an interview:

- **What are your goals in speaking to the media?** What purpose do you hope the interview will serve? Will it help the community learn more about your loved one or understand the impact of crime on victims? Are you willing to answer questions from reporters who might not understand your pain or your point of view?
- **Would the interview invade your privacy?** If you are still struggling with the emotional, physical, or financial impact of the crime, would speaking to a reporter disturb you or make you feel violated? You may want to discuss the pros and cons with a victim advocate before making your decision.
- **Does refusing the interview increase or decrease your control over what is published about the crime?** Denying an interview will not prevent publicity about your case. If the story is newsworthy, the media will publish the story with or without interviewing you. Also, an interview may provide you with an opportunity to offer your perspective on the crime.
- **Would you prefer that someone else speak for you?** If you would rather not be interviewed, you may ask someone else—an attorney, victim advocate, clergy member, another family member, or friend—to represent you in media interviews. That person can also release written statements on your behalf or

accompany you to interviews if you decide to accept them.

- **Would granting an interview affect the investigation or prosecution of the crime?** Giving an interview may compromise the investigation or prosecution of a crime. You may want to speak with an advocate or attorney before deciding to grant an interview.
- **Do you want to set conditions for the interview?** Although reporters and producers may not agree to the conditions you suggest, if they want your interview they will most likely comply with reasonable requests. You have the right to ask or express your wishes regarding:
 - > Time and location of the interview
 - > Visiting the set or location before an interview
 - > Advance information about questions, the reporter's angle, or plans for using your interview
 - > Requesting a victim's advocate, lawyer, or support person be present
 - > Issues you will not discuss
 - > Requesting a specific reporter or producer
 - > Protecting your identity (through silhouettes and electronic distortion of your voice)
 - > Excluding children and other family members from the interview
 - > Excluding photos and other images you find offensive
 - > Excluding offenders or other participants to whom you might object

Preparing Victims for the Interview

Share the following tips with victims who agree to interviews:

- Bring someone to provide support.
- Prepare for the interview by having an advocate list questions the reporter may ask and rehearsing responses.

- Refuse to answer a question by:
 - > Polite refusal: “I’m sorry, but I don’t want to talk about that.”
 - > Bridging: Change the subject to what YOU want to talk about. Answer by saying, “What is really important about that issue is...” and then talk about what you think the audience should know.
- Never speak “off the record.” Reporters may publish or broadcast anything you say.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, simply say you don’t know. Don’t guess or speculate.
- You may request a correction if the article that is published is inaccurate or you are quoted out of context. Newspapers and other outlets may publish corrections and television news may correct serious errors (although the option to do so is theirs). You can also complain to management at the news outlet prior to publication or broadcast if the reporter was aggressive, insensitive, or obtained information dishonestly.
- You may refuse a follow-up interview, even if you have previously agreed to be interviewed a second time.

Victim advocates can play a key role in mediating between reporters and victims, especially when victims are feeling vulnerable and under stress. The victim, his or her family, and the wider community have an important interest in ensuring that media coverage is sensitive, is accurate, and does not put the victim under duress or at risk. ★

